THE TRANSFORMERS
MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE
DAY OF DECEPTION
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Rodimus leads a team of Autobots into Cybertron's past, pursuing the Decepticon double-agent Brainstorm. Realizing Brainstorm plans to use his time-machine briefcase to kill Orion Pax before he became Optimus Prime—thus ensuring the Decepticons win the war against the Autobots—the team helps Pax stop Sentinel's plan to experiment on Cybertronian sparks. However, Brainstorm jumps further back in time—so Rodimus and co. follow him...

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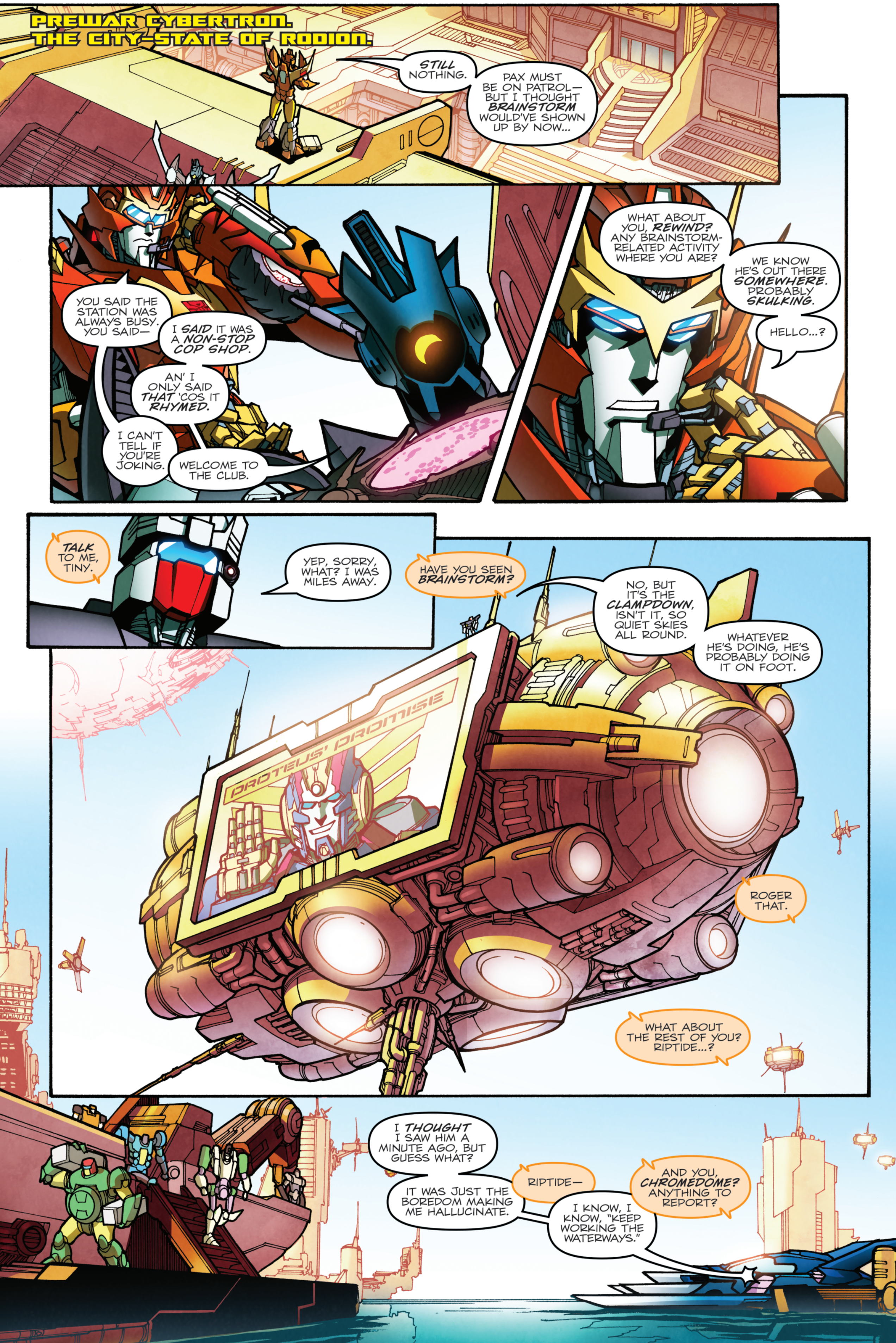
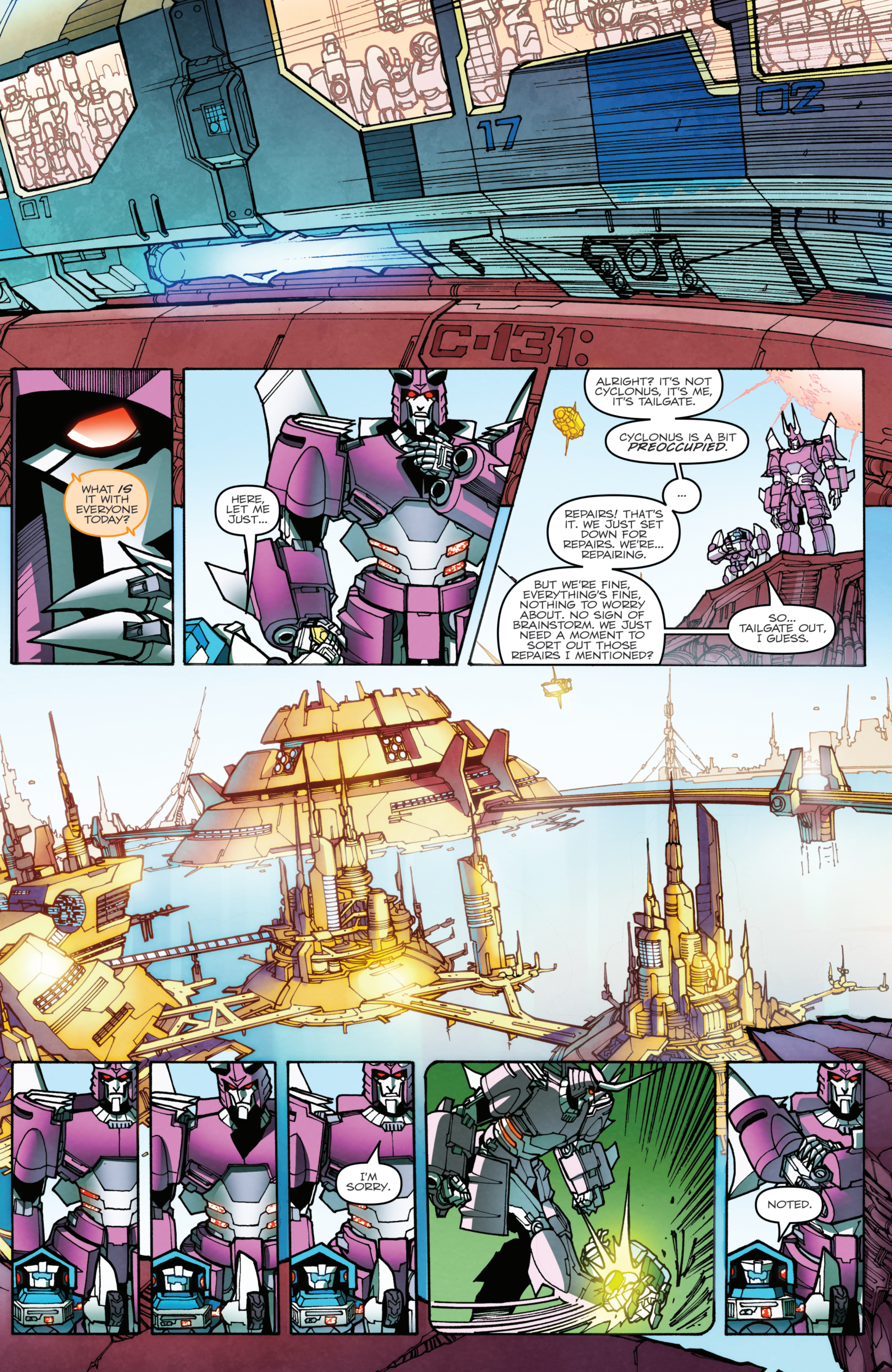
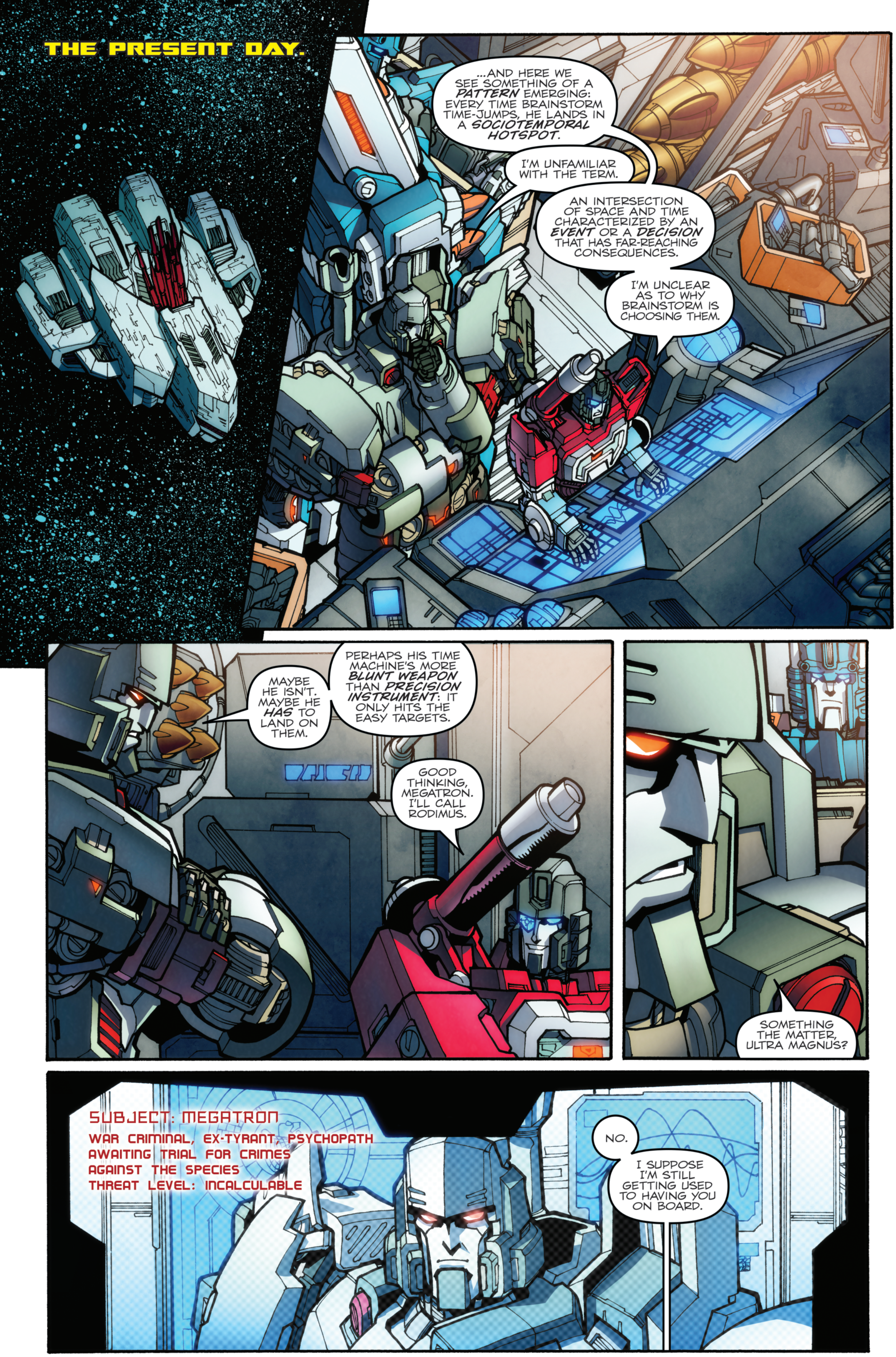
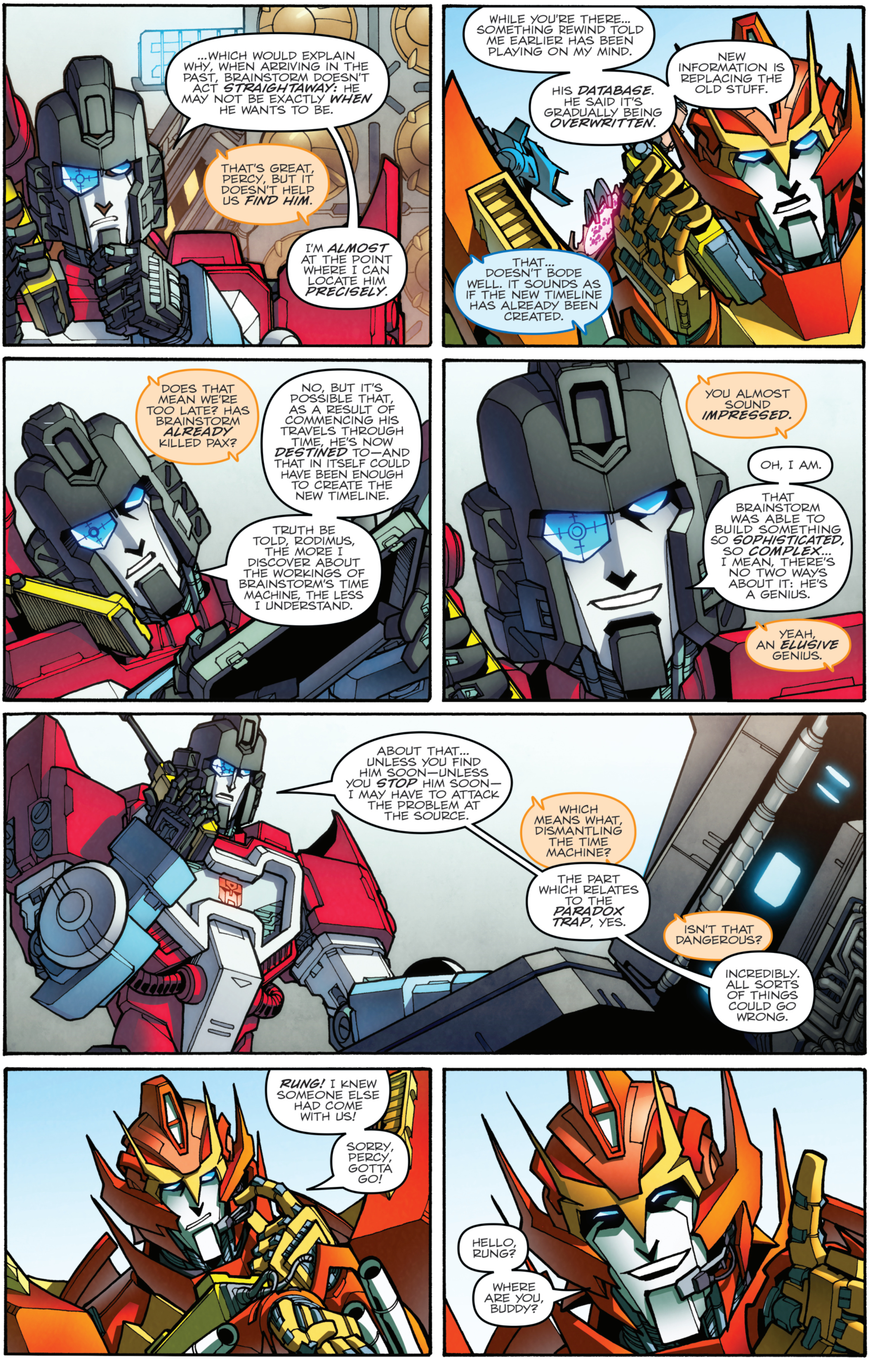

PREWAR CYBERTRON. THE CITY-STATE OF RODION.
STILL NOTHING.
PAX MUST BE ON PATROL— BUT I THOUGHT BRAINSTORM WOULD'VE SHOWN UP BY NOW...
YOU SAID THE STATION WAS ALWAYS BUSY. YOU SAID—
I SAID IT WAS A NON-STOP COP SHOP.
AN' I ONLY SAID THAT 'COS IT RHYMED.
I CAN'T TELL IF YOU'RE JOKING.
WELCOME TO THE CLUB.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, REWIND? ANY BRAINSTORM-RELATED ACTIVITY WHERE YOU ARE?
WE KNOW HE'S OUT THERE SOMEWHERE. PROBABLY SKULKING.
HELLO...?
TALK TO ME, TINY.
YEP, SORRY, WHAT? I WAS MILES AWAY.
HAVE YOU SEEN BRAINSTORM?
NO, BUT IT'S THE CLAMPDOWN, ISN'T IT, SO QUIET SKIES ALL ROUND.
WHATEVER HE'S DOING, HE'S PROBABLY DOING IT ON FOOT.
PROTEUS' PROMISE
ROGER THAT.
WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF YOU? RIPTIDE...?
I THOUGHT I SAW HIM A MINUTE AGO, BUT GUESS WHAT?
IT WAS JUST THE BOREDOM MAKING ME HALLUCINATE.
RIPTIDE—
I KNOW, I KNOW, "KEEP WORKING THE WATERWAYS."
AND YOU, CHROMEDOME? ANYTHING TO REPORT?

YES: MY DEEP AND ABIDING *UNEASE*.
WHAT'S UP?
I FEEL CONSPICUOUS. A 'BOT WITH ***WHEELS ON HIS SHOULDERS*** SHOULD NOT BE RIDING THE TRANSIT TRACKS. I COULD GET ***FINED*** FOR NEGLECTING MY ALT MODE...
SO GET OFF THE TRACKS...! THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO ***SNOOP***.
IF I GET OFF I COULD RUN INTO MY ***PAST SELF***.
IT WASN'T AN ISSUE WHEN WE WERE OUT IN THE STICKS,* BUT ***HERE?*** THIS WAS MY ***PRECINCT***.
PROWL AND I ***LIVED*** ON THESE STREETS.
YOU'RE OKAY—YOU HAVEN'T EVEN BEEN YET!
P.R.: PRE-RODIMUS. MAYBE ***THAT'S*** WHY IT'S SO QUIET...
*SEE LAST ISSUE.
COME ON, CYCLONUS, GIVE ME SOME GOOD NEWS.
CYCLONUS?
IS IT THE ***TIME TRAVEL?*** 'COS I'M ONLY JUST WRAPPING MY HEAD AROUND IT MYSELF. I MEAN ***THINK ABOUT IT***: I'M SOMEWHERE OUT THERE RIGHT NOW, BURIED UNDERGROUND!
ME!
UNDERGROUND! RIGHT NOW! ME!
THE WAY I SEE IT, YOU JUST HAVE TO ACCEPT WHAT'S HAPPENING AS SOMETHING THAT'S... HAPPENING.
AND I THINK THAT'S TRUE OF SO MANY THINGS IN LIFE.
IT'S BEAUTIFUL.
OH! RODION.
CYBERTRON.
YES, WELL, *UM*... DRINK IT IN, I GUESS.
IT'S BEEN SO ***LONG***. SO LONG SINCE I SAW IT AS IT ***SHOULD*** BE SEEN...



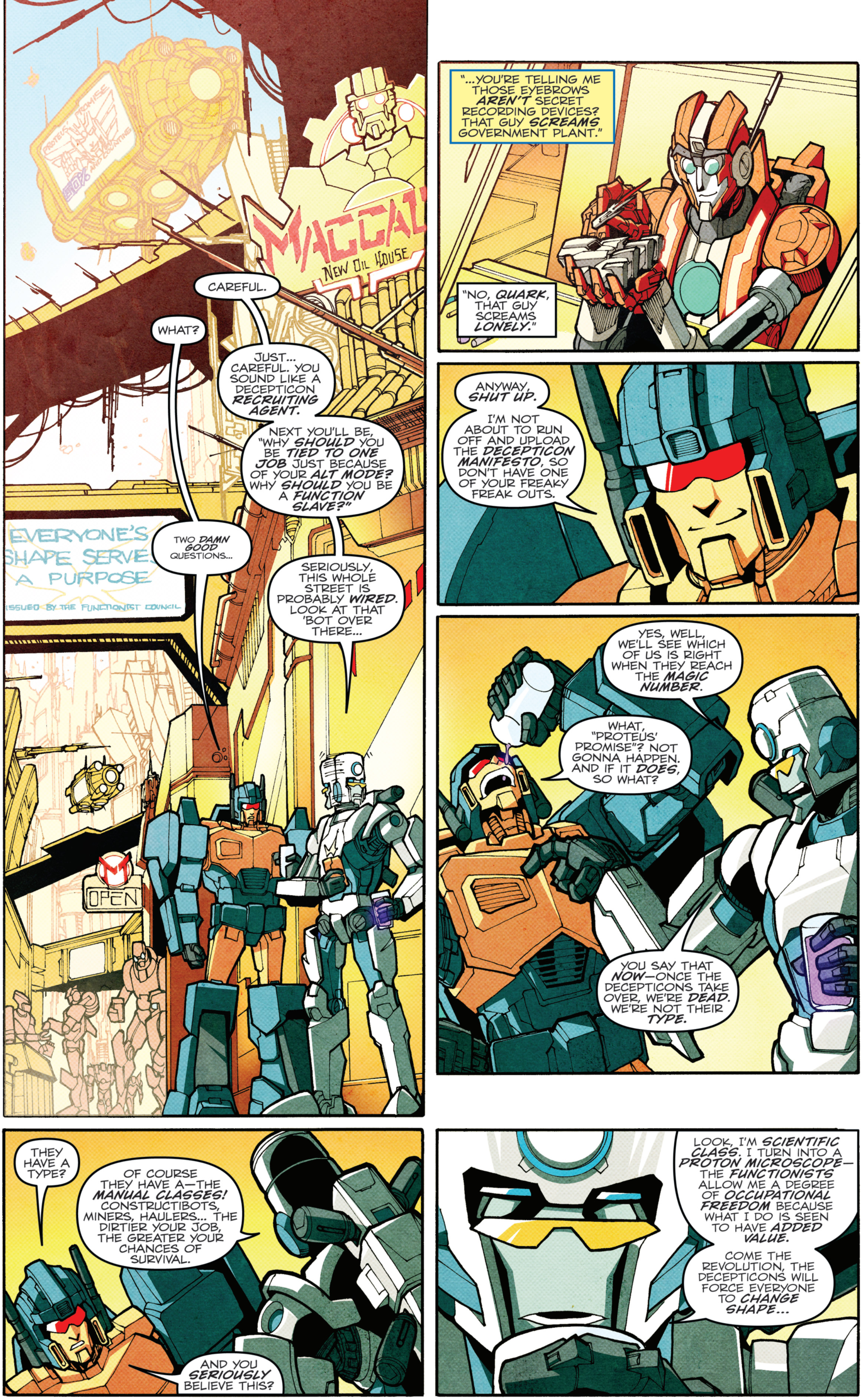
C-131:
WHAT IS IT WITH EVERYONE TODAY?
HERE, LET ME JUST...
ALRIGHT? IT'S NOT CYCLONUS, IT'S ME, IT'S TAILGATE.
CYCLONUS IS A BIT *PREOCCUPIED*.
...
REPAIRS! THAT'S IT. WE JUST SET DOWN FOR REPAIRS. WE'RE... REPAIRING.
BUT WE'RE FINE, EVERYTHING'S FINE, NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT. NO SIGN OF BRAINSTORM. WE JUST NEED A MOMENT TO SORT OUT THOSE REPAIRS I MENTIONED?
SO... TAILGATE OUT, I GUESS.
I'M SORRY.
NOTED.


THE PRESENT DAY.
...AND HERE WE SEE SOMETHING OF A PATTERN EMERGING: EVERY TIME BRAINSTORM TIME-JUMPS, HE LANDS IN A SOCIOTEMPORAL HOTSPOT.
I'M UNFAMILIAR WITH THE TERM.
AN INTERSECTION OF SPACE AND TIME CHARACTERIZED BY AN EVENT OR A DECISION THAT HAS FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES.
I'M UNCLEAR AS TO WHY BRAINSTORM IS CHOOSING THEM.
MAYBE HE ISN'T. MAYBE HE HAS TO LAND ON THEM.
PERHAPS HIS TIME MACHINE'S MORE BLUNT WEAPON THAN PRECISION INSTRUMENT: IT ONLY HITS THE EASY TARGETS.
GOOD THINKING, MEGATRON. I'LL CALL RODIMUS.
SOMETHING THE MATTER, ULTRA MAGNUS?
SUBJECT: MEGATRON
WAR CRIMINAL, EX-TYRANT, PSYCHOPATH
AWAITING TRIAL FOR CRIMES
AGAINST THE SPECIES
THREAT LEVEL: INCALCULABLE
NO.
I SUPPOSE I'M STILL GETTING USED TO HAVING YOU ON BOARD.

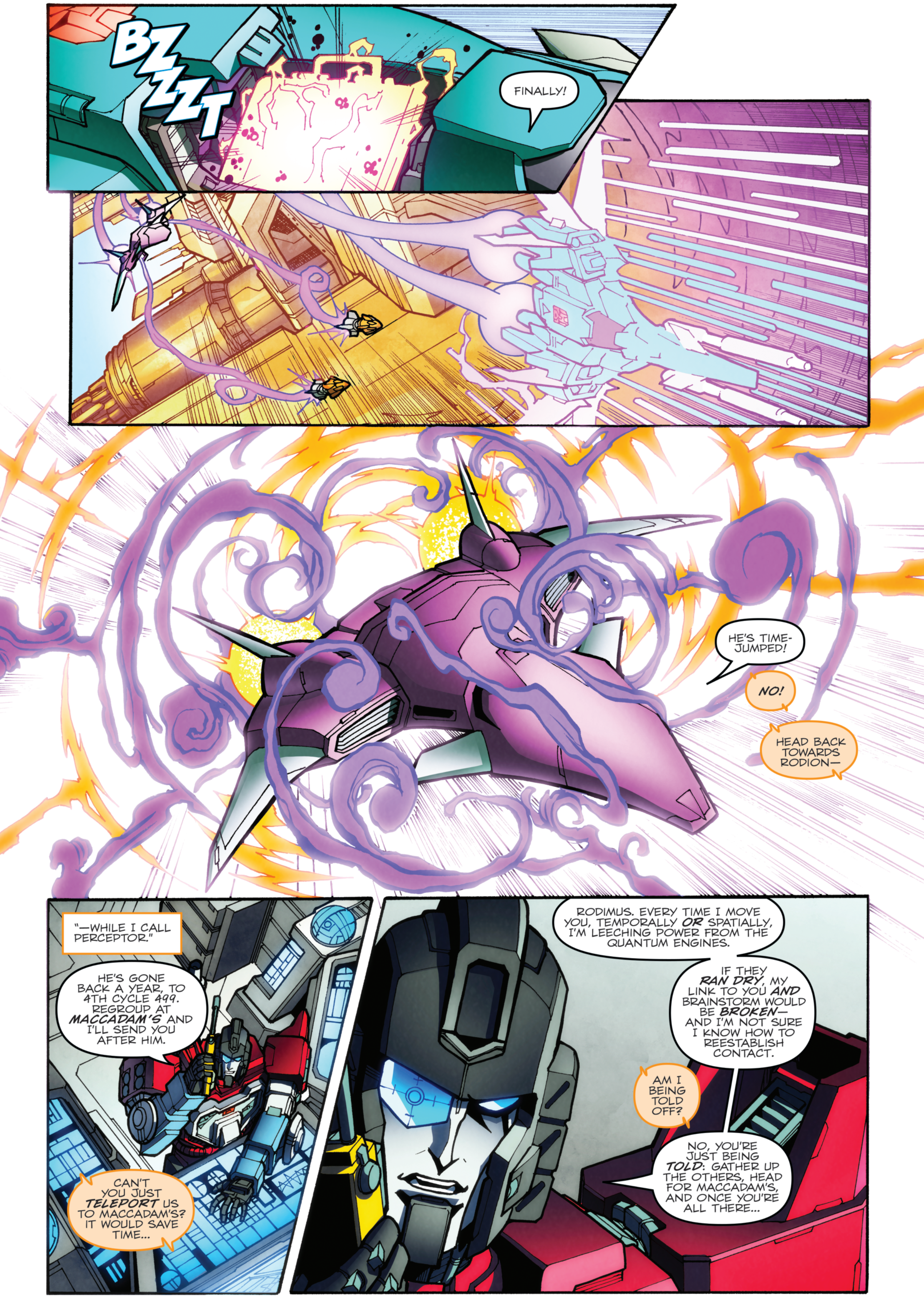

...WHICH WOULD EXPLAIN WHY, WHEN ARRIVING IN THE PAST, BRAINSTORM DOESN'T ACT *STRAIGHTAWAY:* HE MAY NOT BE EXACTLY *WHEN* HE WANTS TO BE.
THAT'S GREAT, PERCY, BUT IT DOESN'T HELP US *FIND HIM*.
I'M *ALMOST* AT THE POINT WHERE I CAN LOCATE HIM *PRECISELY*.
WHILE YOU'RE THERE... SOMETHING REWIND TOLD ME EARLIER HAS BEEN PLAYING ON MY MIND.
HIS *DATABASE*. HE SAID IT'S GRADUALLY BEING *OVERWRITTEN*.
NEW INFORMATION IS REPLACING THE OLD STUFF.
THAT... DOESN'T BODE WELL. IT SOUNDS AS IF THE NEW TIMELINE HAS ALREADY BEEN CREATED.
DOES THAT MEAN WE'RE TOO LATE? HAS BRAINSTORM *ALREADY* KILLED PAX?
NO, BUT IT'S POSSIBLE THAT, AS A RESULT OF COMMENCING HIS TRAVELS THROUGH TIME, HE'S NOW *DESTINED* TO—AND THAT IN ITSELF COULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH TO CREATE THE NEW TIMELINE.
TRUTH BE TOLD, RODIMUS, THE MORE I DISCOVER ABOUT THE WORKINGS OF BRAINSTORM'S TIME MACHINE, THE LESS I UNDERSTAND.
YOU ALMOST SOUND *IMPRESSED*.
OH, I AM.
THAT BRAINSTORM WAS ABLE TO BUILD SOMETHING SO *SOPHISTICATED*, SO *COMPLEX*... I MEAN, THERE'S NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT: HE'S A GENIUS.
YEAH, AN *ELUSIVE* GENIUS.
ABOUT THAT... UNLESS YOU FIND HIM SOON—UNLESS YOU *STOP* HIM SOON—I MAY HAVE TO ATTACK THE PROBLEM AT THE SOURCE.
WHICH MEANS WHAT, DISMANTLING THE TIME MACHINE?
THE PART WHICH RELATES TO THE *PARADOX TRAP*, YES.
ISN'T THAT DANGEROUS?
INCREDIBLY. ALL SORTS OF THINGS COULD GO WRONG.
RUNG! I KNEW SOMEONE ELSE HAD COME WITH US!
SORRY, PERCY, GOTTA GO!
HELLO, RUNG?
WHERE ARE YOU, BUDDY?

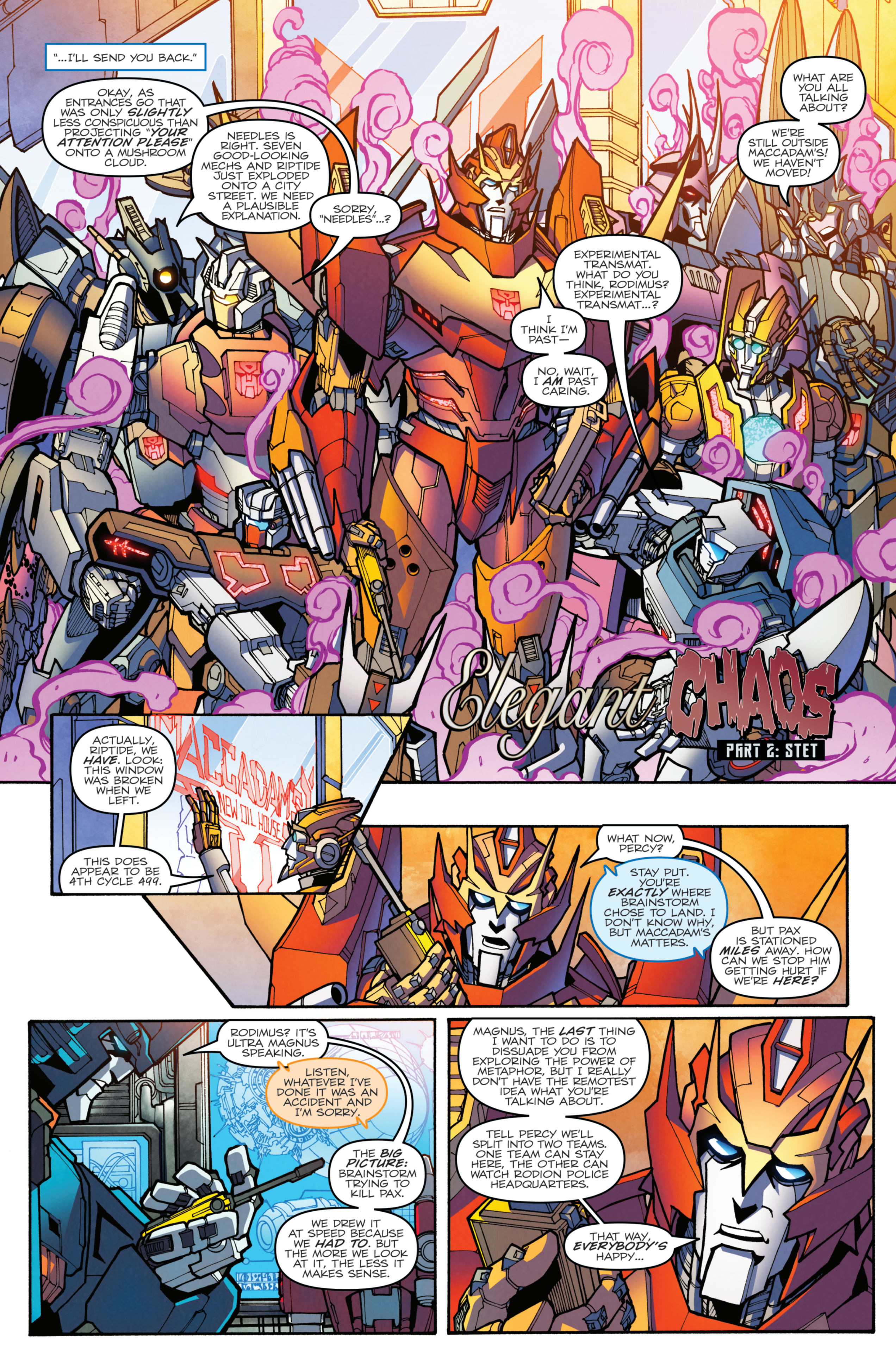
EXACTLY WHERE YOU TOLD ME TO BE: **MACCADAM'S OIL HOUSE**. AND I MUST ADMIT I'M FEELING RATHER **EXPOSED**.
EXPOSED? NO OFFENSE, BUT YOU COULDN'T DRAW ATTENTION TO YOURSELF IF YOU **TRIED**. EVEN **MIRRORS** IGNORE YOU.
YES, BUT THE RUNG OF THIS ERA WORKS NEARBY. I KEEP SEEING PEOPLE I KNOW—OR PEOPLE I **WILL** KNOW.
CASE IN POINT: **NIGHTBEAT'S** OUTSIDE AS WE SPEAK. HE'S WITH HIS SCIENCE FRIEND. (QWERTY? QUARK?)
IF HE TALKS TO ME **NOW**, BEFORE WE'RE DESTINED TO **MEET**, IT MIGHT—
SHHHH. **RELAX**. PLAY WITH YOUR TOYS OR SOMETHING. ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR BRAINSTORM...
...AND BLEND IN.
DAMMIT.

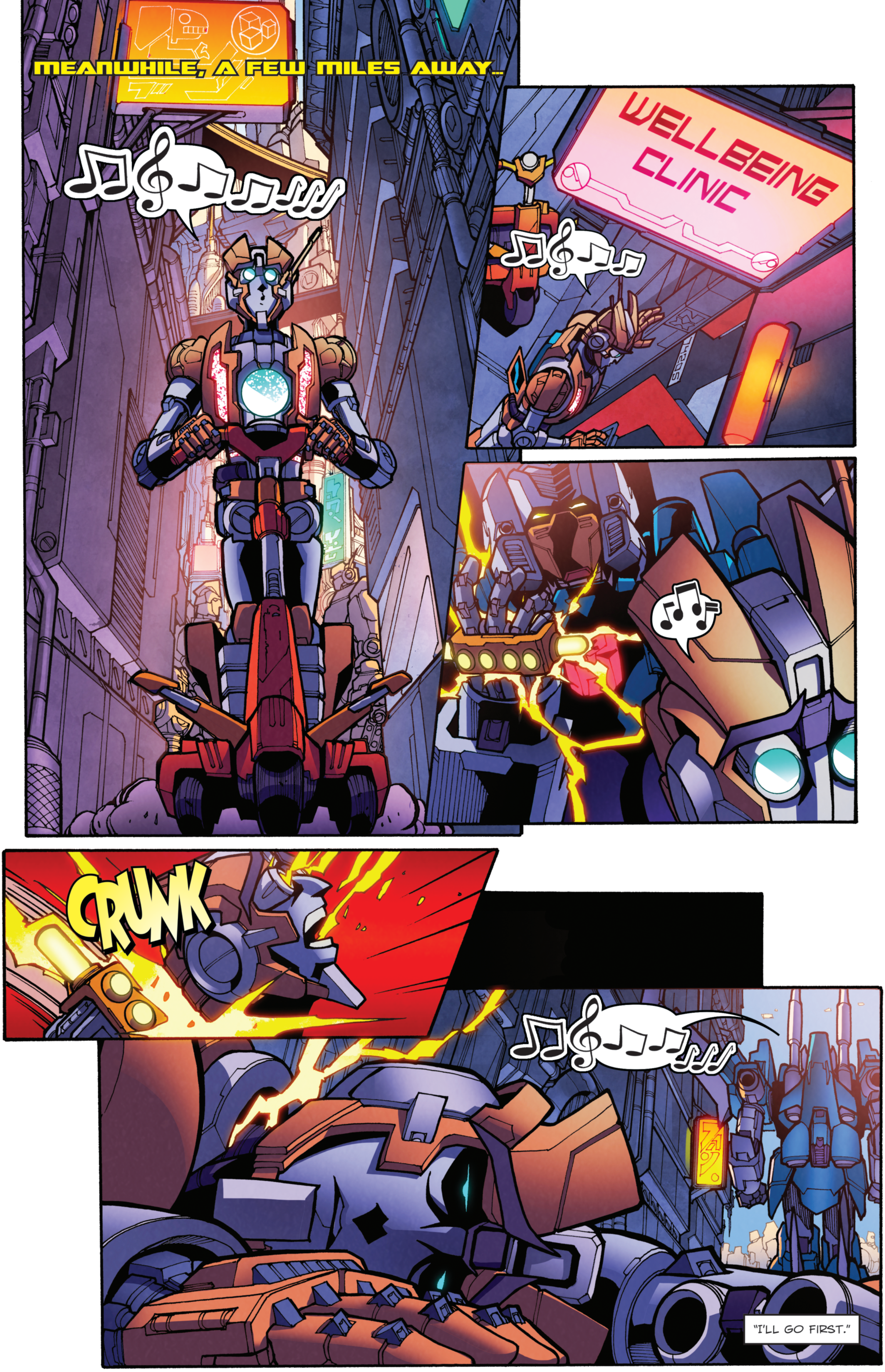
SO. WHAT AM I LOOKING AT AGAIN? NOT *MORE* VIOLENCE.
SOME LUNATIC BURST INTO A ***RELINQUISHMENT CLINIC*** IN ***APOPHENIA*** AND STARTED SHOOTING ***DONORS***.
WHERE DID HE GET THE GUN?
MACCADAM'S
NEW OIL HOUSE
READ THE WHOLE STORY. HE WAS ***EX-MILITARY***—PRIMAL VANGUARD. THE GUN WAS PART OF HIS ***ANATOMY***.
SOUNDS LIKE ONE OF THOSE RECEPTICON FANATICS.
IT'S "***D***": ***DE***-CEPTICON. AFTER THEIR ***SLOGAN***: "YOU ARE BEING DECEIVED."
THANK YOU, ***NIGHTBEAT***. I STAND ***IMMEDIATELY*** CORRECTED.
I ***KNEW*** YOU'D BLAME THE DECEPTICONS. YOU SOUND LIKE THE SENATE USED TO, BEFORE THE ***U-TURN***.
I'M NO FAN OF THE SENATE. THEY SAID ***THE CLAMPDOWN*** WOULD MAKE CYBERTRON ***SAFE***.
THE CLAMPDOWN IS ***INSANELY*** COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. THE ***CURFEWS***, THE ***SKY SPIES***... AND PRIMUS HELP YOU IF YOU'VE GOT A ***TARNIAN ACCENT***.
YOU PUSH THE PUBLIC TOO FAR AND THEY'LL ***PUSH BACK***.

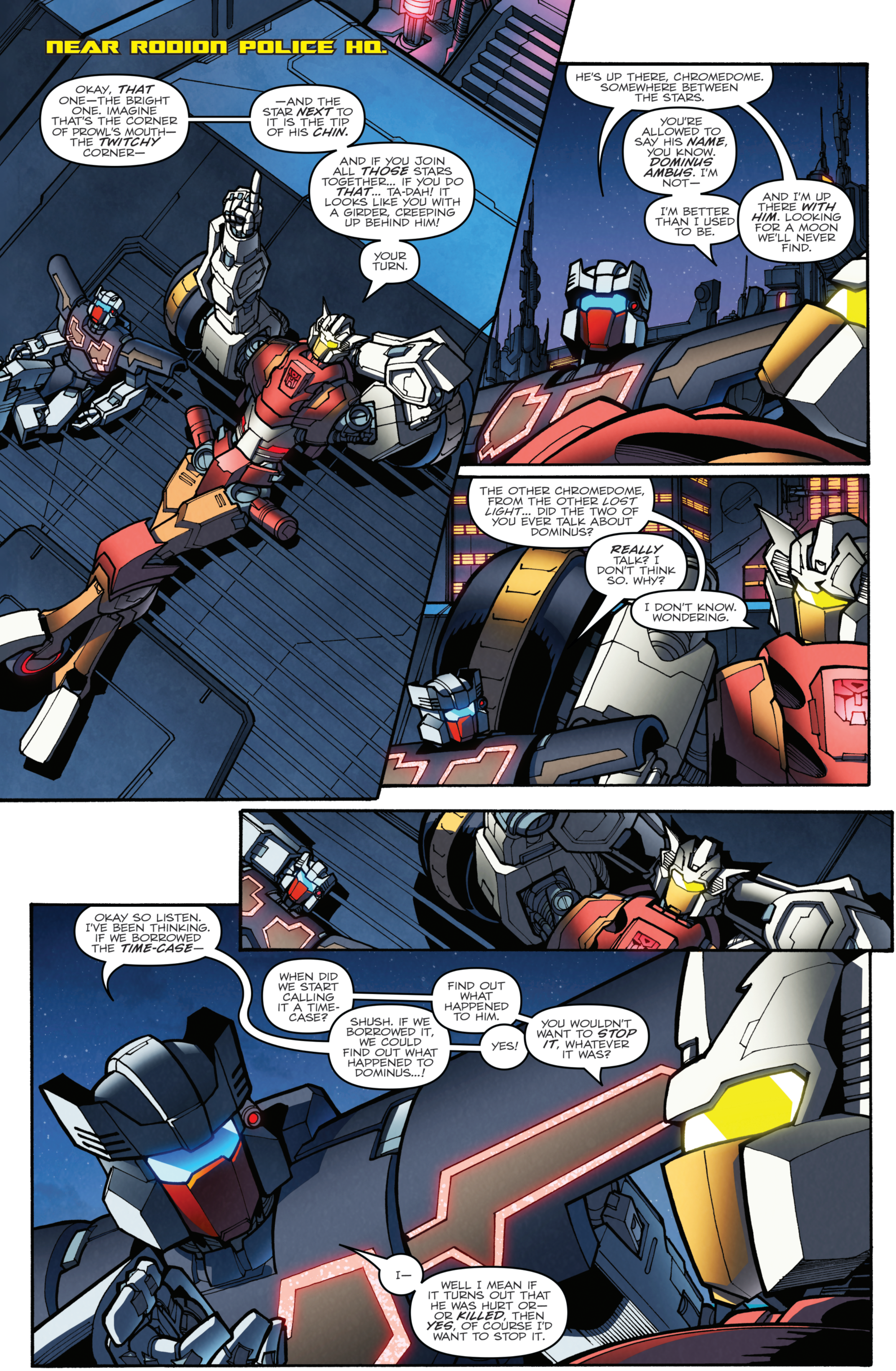

NEW OIL HOUSE
CAREFUL.
WHAT?
JUST... CAREFUL. YOU SOUND LIKE A DECEPTICON RECRUITING AGENT.
NEXT YOU'LL BE, "WHY SHOULD YOU BE TIED TO ONE JOB JUST BECAUSE OF YOUR ALT MODE? WHY SHOULD YOU BE A FUNCTION SLAVE?"
TWO DAMN GOOD QUESTIONS...
EVERYONE'S SHAPE SERVE A PURPOSE
ISSUED BY THE FUNCTIONIST COUNCIL
SERIOUSLY, THIS WHOLE STREET IS PROBABLY WIRED. LOOK AT THAT 'BOT OVER THERE...
OPEN
"...YOU'RE TELLING ME THOSE EYEBROWS AREN'T SECRET RECORDING DEVICES? THAT GUY SCREAMS GOVERNMENT PLANT."
"NO, QUARK, THAT GUY SCREAMS LONELY."
ANYWAY, SHUT UP.
I'M NOT ABOUT TO RUN OFF AND UPLOAD THE DECEPTICON MANIFESTO, SO DON'T HAVE ONE OF YOUR FREAKY FREAK OUTS.
YES, WELL, WE'LL SEE WHICH OF US IS RIGHT WHEN THEY REACH THE MAGIC NUMBER.
WHAT, "PROTEUS' PROMISE"? NOT GONNA HAPPEN. AND IF IT DOES, SO WHAT?
YOU SAY THAT NOW—ONCE THE DECEPTICONS TAKE OVER, WE'RE DEAD. WE'RE NOT THEIR TYPE.
THEY HAVE A TYPE?
OF COURSE THEY HAVE A—THE MANUAL CLASSES! CONSTRUCTIBOTS, MINERS, HAULERS... THE DIRTIER YOUR JOB, THE GREATER YOUR CHANCES OF SURVIVAL.
AND YOU SERIOUSLY BELIEVE THIS?
LOOK, I'M SCIENTIFIC CLASS. I TURN INTO A PROTON MICROSCOPE—THE FUNCTIONISTS ALLOW ME A DEGREE OF OCCUPATIONAL FREEDOM BECAUSE WHAT I DO IS SEEN TO HAVE ADDED VALUE.
COME THE REVOLUTION, THE DECEPTICONS WILL FORCE EVERYONE TO CHANGE SHAPE...

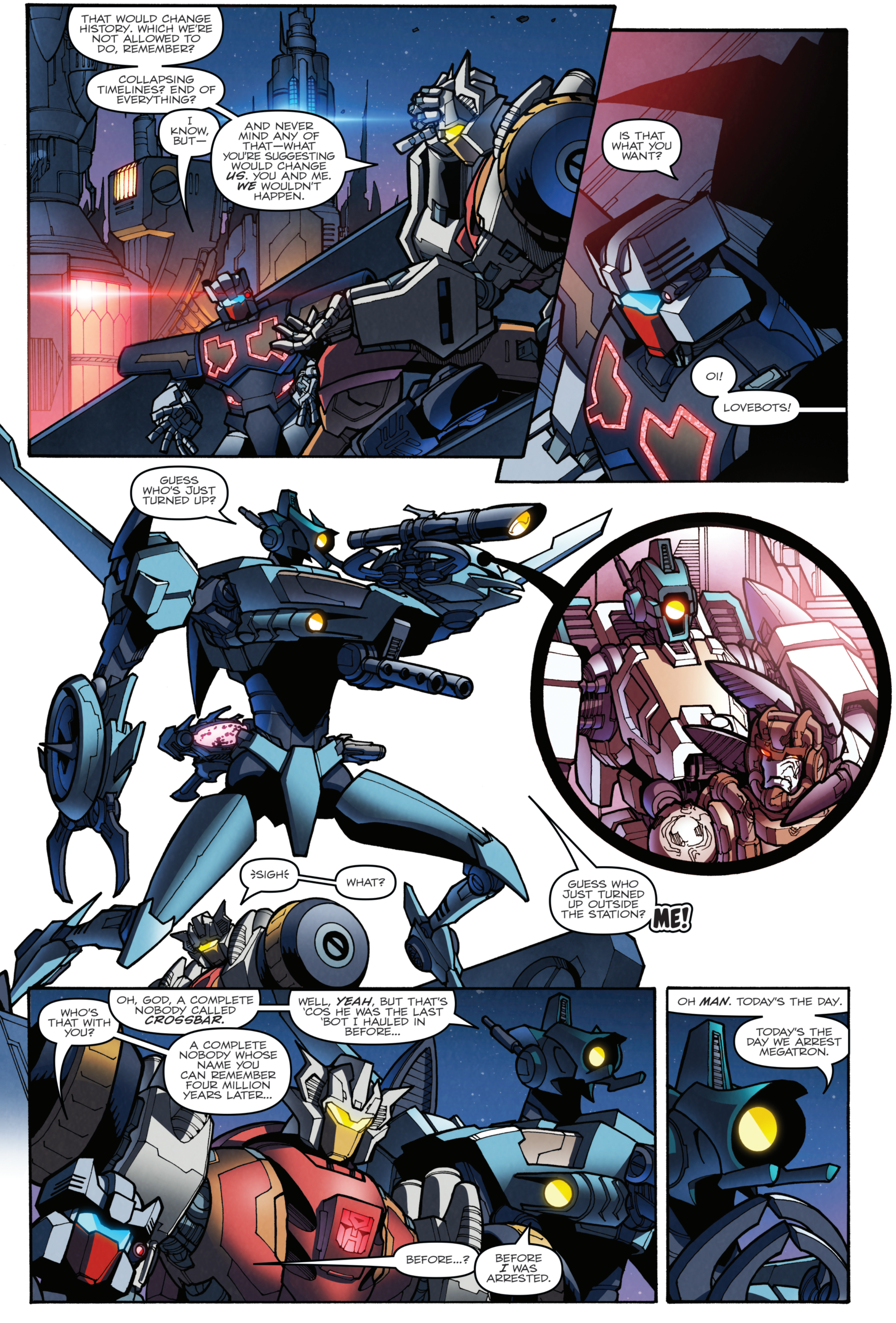
"...AND ANYONE WITHOUT A **DRILL BIT** OR A **SCOOP** WILL BE **SHOT ON THE SPOT**."
I CAN SEE HIM!
RODIMUS! I CAN SEE BRAINSTORM! HE'S FLYING WESTWARDS, TOWARDS THE **DEAD END!**
CYCLONUS— YOU'RE OUT WEST. CAN YOU INTERCEPT?
ON IT.
HE'S IN MY SIGHTS. DO I SHOOT TO KILL?
RODIMUS? DO I SHOOT TO KILL?
YES.
SERIOUSLY?!
I—
OKAY, YOU'RE RIGHT, **GROUND HIM.** DON'T KILL HIM—TAKE HIM DOWN.


BZZZZT
FINALLY!
HE'S TIME-JUMPED!
NO!
HEAD BACK TOWARDS RODION—
"—WHILE I CALL PERCEPTOR."
HE'S GONE BACK A YEAR, TO 4TH CYCLE 499. REGROUP AT MACCADAM'S AND I'LL SEND YOU AFTER HIM.
CAN'T YOU JUST TELEPORT US TO MACCADAM'S? IT WOULD SAVE TIME...
RODIMUS. EVERY TIME I MOVE YOU, TEMPORALLY OR SPATIALLY, I'M LEECHING POWER FROM THE QUANTUM ENGINES.
IF THEY RAN DRY, MY LINK TO YOU AND BRAINSTORM WOULD BE BROKEN— AND I'M NOT SURE I KNOW HOW TO REESTABLISH CONTACT.
AM I BEING TOLD OFF?
NO, YOU'RE JUST BEING TOLD: GATHER UP THE OTHERS, HEAD FOR MACCADAM'S, AND ONCE YOU'RE ALL THERE...


"...I'LL SEND YOU BACK."
OKAY, AS ENTRANCES GO THAT WAS ONLY *SLIGHTLY* LESS CONSPICUOUS THAN PROJECTING "*YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE*" ONTO A MUSHROOM CLOUD.
NEEDLES IS RIGHT. SEVEN GOOD-LOOKING MECHS AND RIPTIDE JUST EXPLODED ONTO A CITY STREET. WE NEED A PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION.
SORRY, "NEEDLES"...?
EXPERIMENTAL TRANSMAT. WHAT DO YOU THINK, RODIMUS? EXPERIMENTAL TRANSMAT...?
I THINK I'M PAST—
NO, WAIT, I *AM* PAST CARING.
WHAT ARE YOU ALL TALKING ABOUT?
WE'RE STILL OUTSIDE MACCADAM'S! WE HAVEN'T MOVED!
Elegant CHAOS
PART 2: STET
ACTUALLY, RIPTIDE, WE *HAVE*. LOOK: THIS WINDOW WAS BROKEN WHEN WE LEFT.
THIS DOES APPEAR TO BE 4TH CYCLE 499.
MACCADAM'S
NEW OIL HOUSE
WHAT NOW, PERCY?
STAY PUT. YOU'RE *EXACTLY* WHERE BRAINSTORM CHOSE TO LAND. I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT MACCADAM'S MATTERS.
BUT PAX IS STATIONED *MILES* AWAY. HOW CAN WE STOP HIM GETTING HURT IF WE'RE *HERE?*
RODIMUS? IT'S ULTRA MAGNUS SPEAKING.
LISTEN, WHATEVER I'VE DONE IT WAS AN ACCIDENT AND I'M SORRY.
THE *BIG PICTURE:* BRAINSTORM TRYING TO KILL PAX.
WE DREW IT AT SPEED BECAUSE WE *HAD TO*. BUT THE MORE WE LOOK AT IT, THE LESS IT MAKES SENSE.
MAGNUS, THE *LAST* THING I WANT TO DO IS TO DISSUADE YOU FROM EXPLORING THE POWER OF METAPHOR, BUT I REALLY DON'T HAVE THE REMOTEST IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
TELL PERCY WE'LL SPLIT INTO TWO TEAMS. ONE TEAM CAN STAY HERE, THE OTHER CAN WATCH RODION POLICE HEADQUARTERS.
THAT WAY, *EVERYBODY'S* HAPPY...


MEANWHILE, A FEW MILES AWAY...
WELLBEING CLINIC
CRUNK
"I'LL GO FIRST."


NEAR RODION POLICE HQ.
OKAY, THAT ONE—THE BRIGHT ONE. IMAGINE THAT'S THE CORNER OF PROWL'S MOUTH—THE TWITCHY CORNER—
—AND THE STAR NEXT TO IT IS THE TIP OF HIS CHIN.
AND IF YOU JOIN ALL THOSE STARS TOGETHER... IF YOU DO THAT... TA-DAH! IT LOOKS LIKE YOU WITH A GIRDER, CREEPING UP BEHIND HIM!
YOUR TURN.
HE'S UP THERE, CHROMEDOME. SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE STARS.
YOU'RE ALLOWED TO SAY HIS NAME, YOU KNOW. DOMINUS AMBUS. I'M NOT—
I'M BETTER THAN I USED TO BE.
AND I'M UP THERE WITH HIM. LOOKING FOR A MOON WE'LL NEVER FIND.
THE OTHER CHROMEDOME, FROM THE OTHER LOST LIGHT... DID THE TWO OF YOU EVER TALK ABOUT DOMINUS?
REALLY TALK? I DON'T THINK SO. WHY?
I DON'T KNOW. WONDERING.
OKAY SO LISTEN. I'VE BEEN THINKING. IF WE BORROWED THE TIME-CASE—
WHEN DID WE START CALLING IT A TIME-CASE?
SHUSH. IF WE BORROWED IT, WE COULD FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO DOMINUS...!
FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.
YES!
YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO STOP IT, WHATEVER IT WAS?
I—
WELL I MEAN IF IT TURNS OUT THAT HE WAS HURT OR—OR KILLED, THEN YES, OF COURSE I'D WANT TO STOP IT.


THAT WOULD CHANGE HISTORY. WHICH WE'RE NOT ALLOWED TO DO, REMEMBER?
COLLAPSING TIMELINES? END OF EVERYTHING?
I KNOW, BUT—
AND NEVER MIND ANY OF THAT—WHAT YOU'RE SUGGESTING WOULD CHANGE *US*. YOU AND ME. *WE* WOULDN'T HAPPEN.
IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?
OI!
LOVEBOTS!
GUESS WHO'S JUST TURNED UP?
GUESS WHO JUST TURNED UP OUTSIDE THE STATION?
ME!
SIGH
WHAT?
WHO'S THAT WITH YOU?
OH, GOD, A COMPLETE NOBODY CALLED *CROSSBAR*.
A COMPLETE NOBODY WHOSE NAME YOU CAN REMEMBER FOUR MILLION YEARS LATER...
WELL, *YEAH*, BUT THAT'S 'COS HE WAS THE LAST 'BOT I HAULED IN BEFORE...
BEFORE...?
BEFORE *I* WAS ARRESTED.
OH *MAN*. TODAY'S THE DAY.
TODAY'S THE DAY WE ARREST MEGATRON.

MACCADAM'S OIL HOUSE.
WHEN DID *THEY* GET HERE?
THEY WERE HERE WHEN WE ARRIVED. MEGATRON WAS READING OUT SOME OF HIS POETRY.
IT WAS QUITE *EXCELLENT*.
THE 'BOT WITH THE DRILL FOR A HAND IS *IMPACTOR*, FUTURE LEADER OF THE WRECKERS.
NO, I KNOW THAT. HE'S KINDA FAMOUS. NOT *YOU* FAMOUS, *PROPER* FAMOUS.
GETAWAY THINKS *I* COULD BE A WRECKER.
OF COURSE HE DOES.
THAT'S WHAT HE SAID! WE WERE IN THE RODPOD ON THE WAY BACK TO THE *LOST LIGHT*, AND THAT'S WHAT HE SAID.
WHERE'S MY STRAW, RIPTIDE?
I ASKED FOR A CURLY STRAW.
"CHILL! RUNG'S GETTING YOU ONE. JEEZ, IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD..."
SORRY, DO YOU MIND IF I...?
KONK
DRINK UP, FOLKS. WE'RE LEAVING.
REWIND JUST CALLED TO SAY IT'S ALL GONNA KICK OFF.
SOME KIND OF *BARROOM BRAWL* THAT ENDS UP WITH MEGATRON GETTING *ARRESTED*.
A *BRAWL?* ALL SEEMS PRETTY QUIET TO ME.

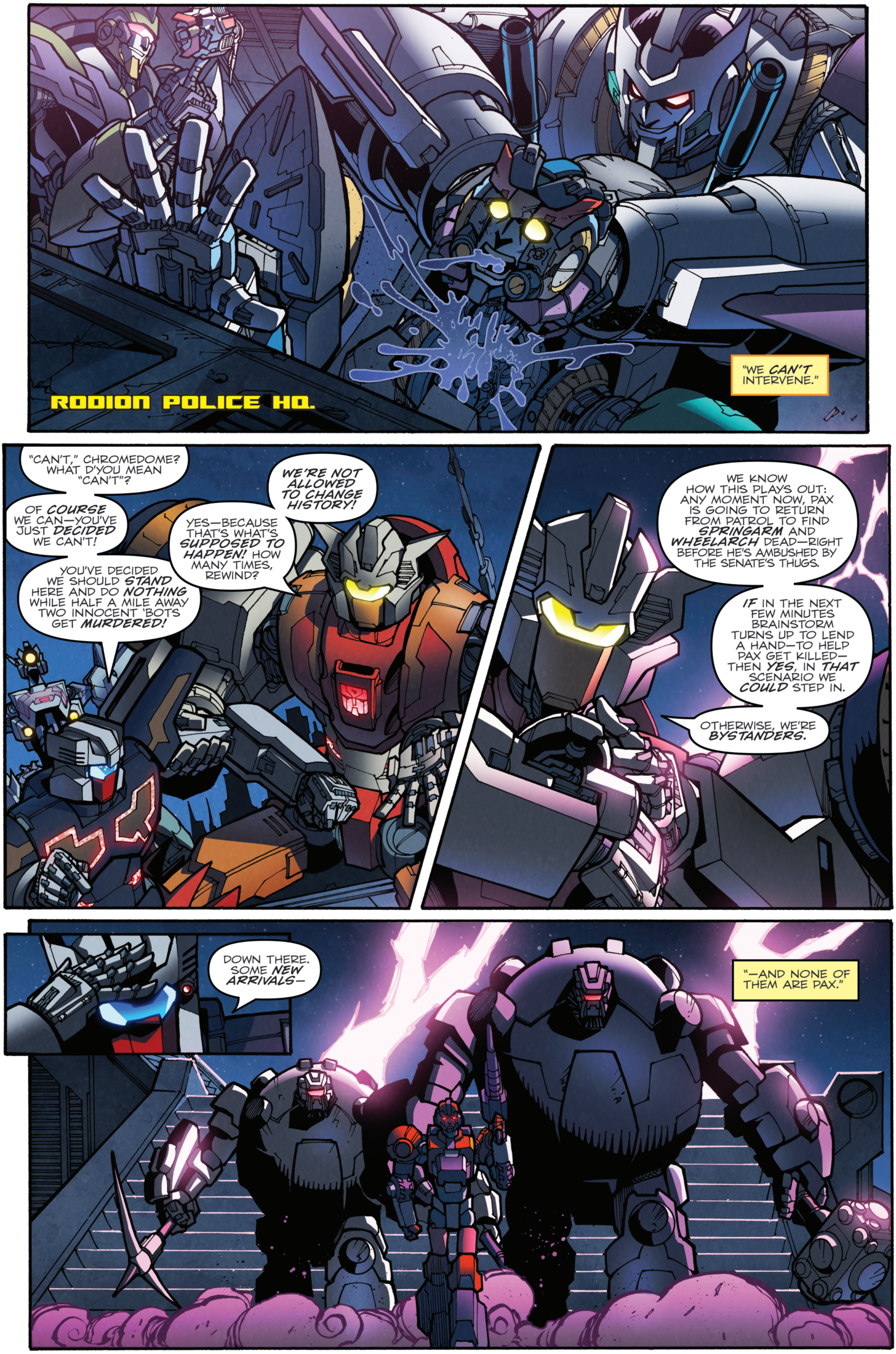
SO. WHAT AM I LOOKING AT AGAIN? NOT MORE POETRY...
NO. IT'S MORE OF A—OF A TREATISE. ON THE STATE OF CYBERTRONIAN SOCIETY. I STARTED WRITING IT AFTER THOSE PROTESTORS WERE SHOT.
THERE'S A CHAPTER HERE CALLED "AFTER THE ARK: NOMINUS PRIME AND THE ILLUSION OF PROGRESS." YOU FEEL PRETTY STRONGLY ABOUT THIS STUFF, HUH?
THIS PLANET IS DISEASED, IMPACTOR. AND THAT'S THE CURE.
"NON-VIOLENT DIRECT ACTION"? WHY DON'T WE JUST ROUND UP A FEW HUNDRED OF OUR FELLOW MINERS, BREAK OUT THE PATHBLASTERS AND TAKE THE SENATE BY FORCE?
BECAUSE THE REVOLUTION WILL BE ABOUT IDEAS. TAKING A NEW STEP, UTTERING A NEW WORD... THAT'S WHAT THE RULING ELITE FEARS THE MOST. VIOLENCE SOLVES NOTHING.
YEAH, WELL, I'LL REMEMBER THAT THE NEXT TIME I'M BEING PISTOL-WHIPPED BY MY SUPERVISOR.
NOW I'M SORRY, BUT I'M NOT GOING TO—
—CLEAN IT UP.
YOU SPILLED IT, RUNT.
MY NAME'S NOT RUNT, IT'S RUNG. I'LL BUY YOU ANOTHER BUT I'M NOT SORTING OUT THE MESS. I'M NOT A SERVICE DROID.
WHO ARE YOU, THEN? ONE OF THE KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON? THE LAST OF THE PROGENITORS? ALPHA TRION'S LONG-LOST SPARK BROTHER?
YOU SEEM TO HAVE FORGOTTEN YOUR PLACE IN THE NATURAL ORDER OF THINGS.
SO WHY DON'T YOU GET DOWN ON YOUR KNEES—WHILE YOU STILL HAVE KNEES—AND STAY THERE UNTIL MY FRIEND AND I HAVE FINISHED THE TEN DRINKS YOU'RE GONNA BUY US.
WHAT DO YOU SAY? DO WE HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING?

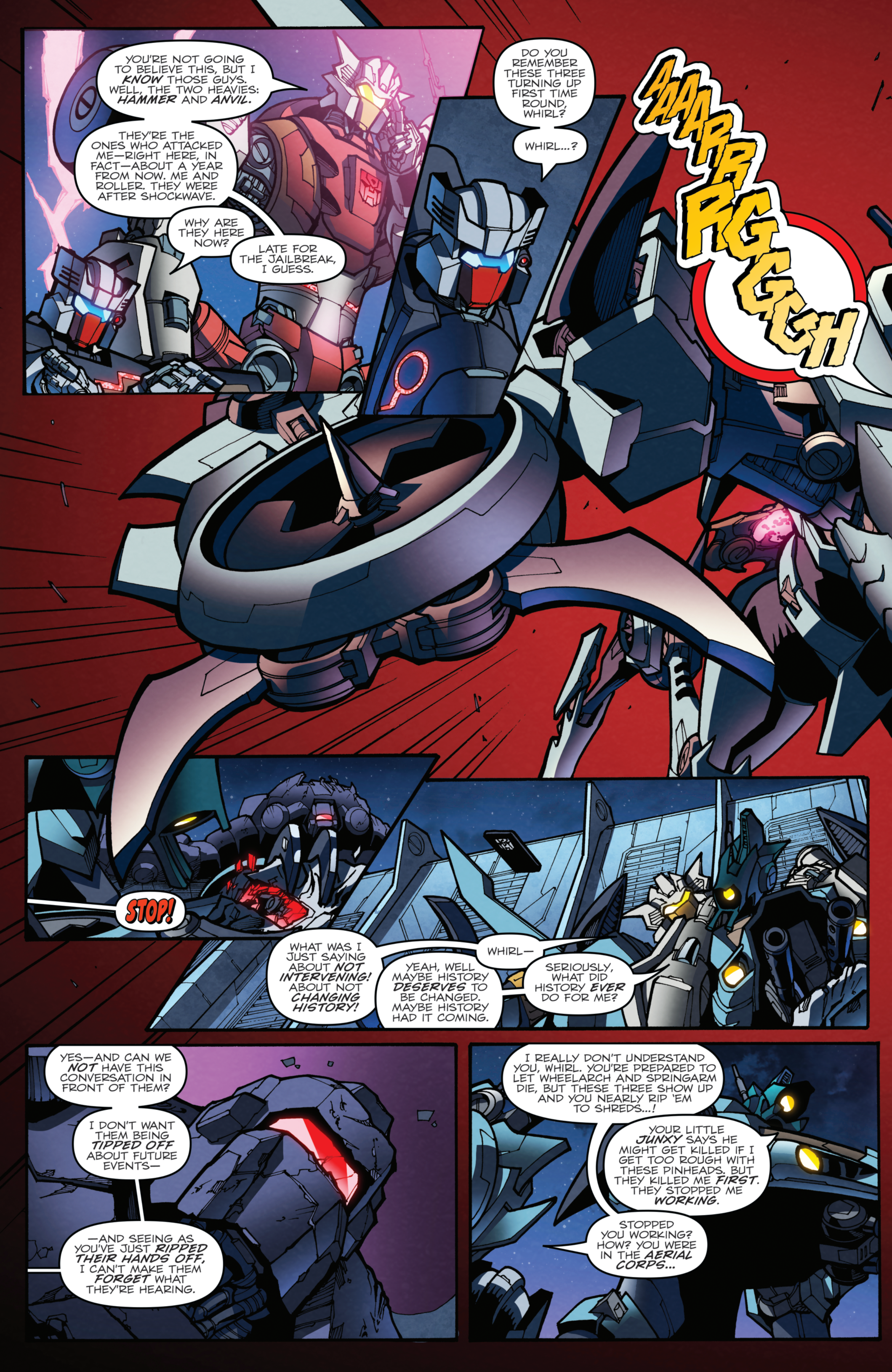
LOOK, MEGATRON. I HATE THE "RULING ELITE" AS MUCH AS YOU DO, BUT INEQUALITY IS A WAY OF LIFE. PUT TWO PEOPLE IN A ROOM AND ONE WILL ALWAYS TRY TO ASSERT HIMSELF OVER THE OTHER.
NOW APPLY THAT TO THE WHOLE OF SOCIETY...
SO WHAT'S THE ANSWER? ACCEPT OUR LOT? SPEND ALL OUR *SURFACE TIME* GETTING TANKED UP ON LOW-GRADE ENER—
KRENCH
HEY, IF I DIDN'T GET DRUNK, I'D PROBABLY LET JUICED-UP CADETS LIKE THAT THROW ROBOTS ACROSS ROOMS.
BUT SEEING AS I'M FIVE QUARTS OF ENERGON TO THE WIND, I THINK I'M GONNA GIVE THEM A QUICK LESSON IN MANNERS.
WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO SAY TO THEM?
I'M NOT GONNA *SAY* ANYTHING. I'M GOING TO DO WHAT I *ALWAYS* DO IN THESE SITUATIONS...
...AND THINK WITH MY *FIST*.

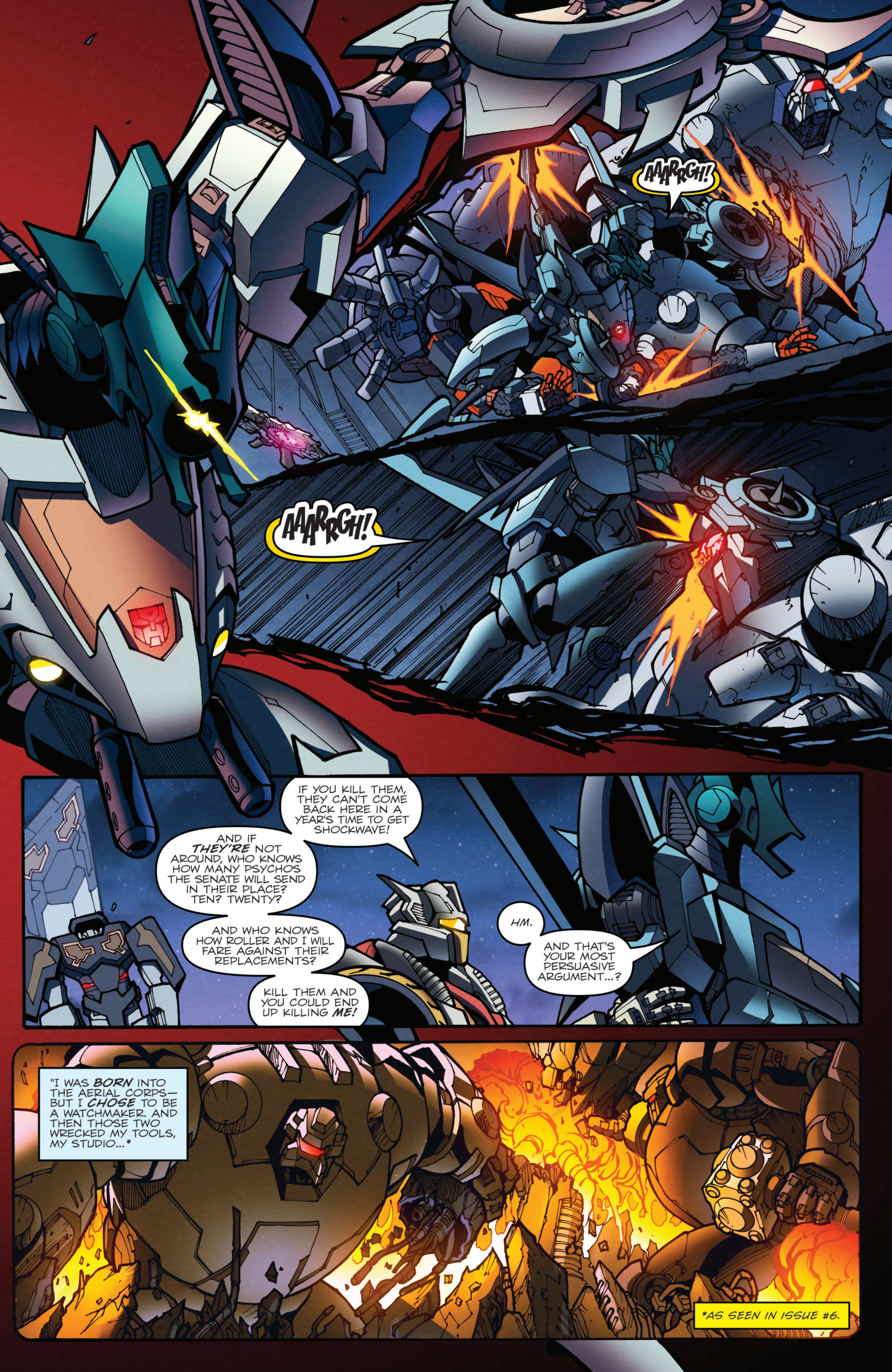
YEAH?
YEAH?
YOU WANT SOME TOO, YOU FRIKKIN' ***DIRT-DIGGER?***
SMASH
RIPTIDE! WE DO ***NOT*** THROW THE TIME CASE, OKAY?!
WHEN DID WE START CALLING IT A TIME CASE?
THE BACK DOOR'S THIS WAY. NO ONE MAKE EYE CONTACT WITH ANYBODY.
ESPECIALLY NOT YOU, TAILGATE.
WHY ESPECIALLY NOT ME?
BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT ONE OF THOSE FACES.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY FACE?
IT'S BASICALLY A ***PUNCH MAGNET.***
SO ***RUDE!*** CYCLONUS, DID YOU HEAR THAT?
NO.
WAS IT ABOUT YOUR FACE?

TIME TO GO! WE CAN'T RISK HURTING SOME-ONE WHO'S NOT SUPPOSED TO GET HURT!
SOMEBODY HELP ME GET RUNG!
MANUAL SCUM.
CHOOM
OOF!
THWAK
ALWAYS THE HEAD...
LOOK AT HIM, CYCLONUS! COWERING UNDER THE TABLE! LOOK AT HIM!
WHERE'S REWIND WHEN YOU NEED A CAMERA?
UNBELIEVABLE.

DON'T LOOK OUTSIDE.
I CAN'T—THERE AREN'T ANY WINDOWS IN HERE.
WHY, WHAT'S OUTSIDE?
WHAT WOULD I SEE?
IF YOU LOOKED CLOSELY ENOUGH, YOU'D SEE THAT NOTHING'S MOVING.
EVERYTHING APART FROM THE *LOST LIGHT* HAS FROZEN. THE PRESENT DAY HAS ***STOPPED.***
THIS SHIP IS NOW THE ONLY ***TEMPORALLY ACTIVE*** EVENT IN THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE.
I'M AN OPTIMIST BY NATURE... BUT IN NO WAY DOES THAT SOUND LIKE A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT.
IT ISN'T. WE HAVE LESS THAN AN HOUR BEFORE THE TOTAL COLLAPSE OF THIS TIMELINE.
THIS DATE... 4TH CYCLE 499 IS THE DAY I WAS ARRESTED. WHIRL ATTACKED ME IN MY CELL AND THEN PAX SET ME FREE...
AND THEN WHIRL GOT ***HIMSELF*** LOCKED UP.
AND A FEW HOURS AFTER ***THAT,*** HALF OF ORION'S TEAM DIED TRYING TO PREVENT A JAILBREAK. I'M FAMILIAR WITH THE STORY.
WHY? WHAT'S YOUR POINT?
SUBJECT: NOT RECOGNIZED
I THINK WE'VE MADE A HUGE MISTAKE.

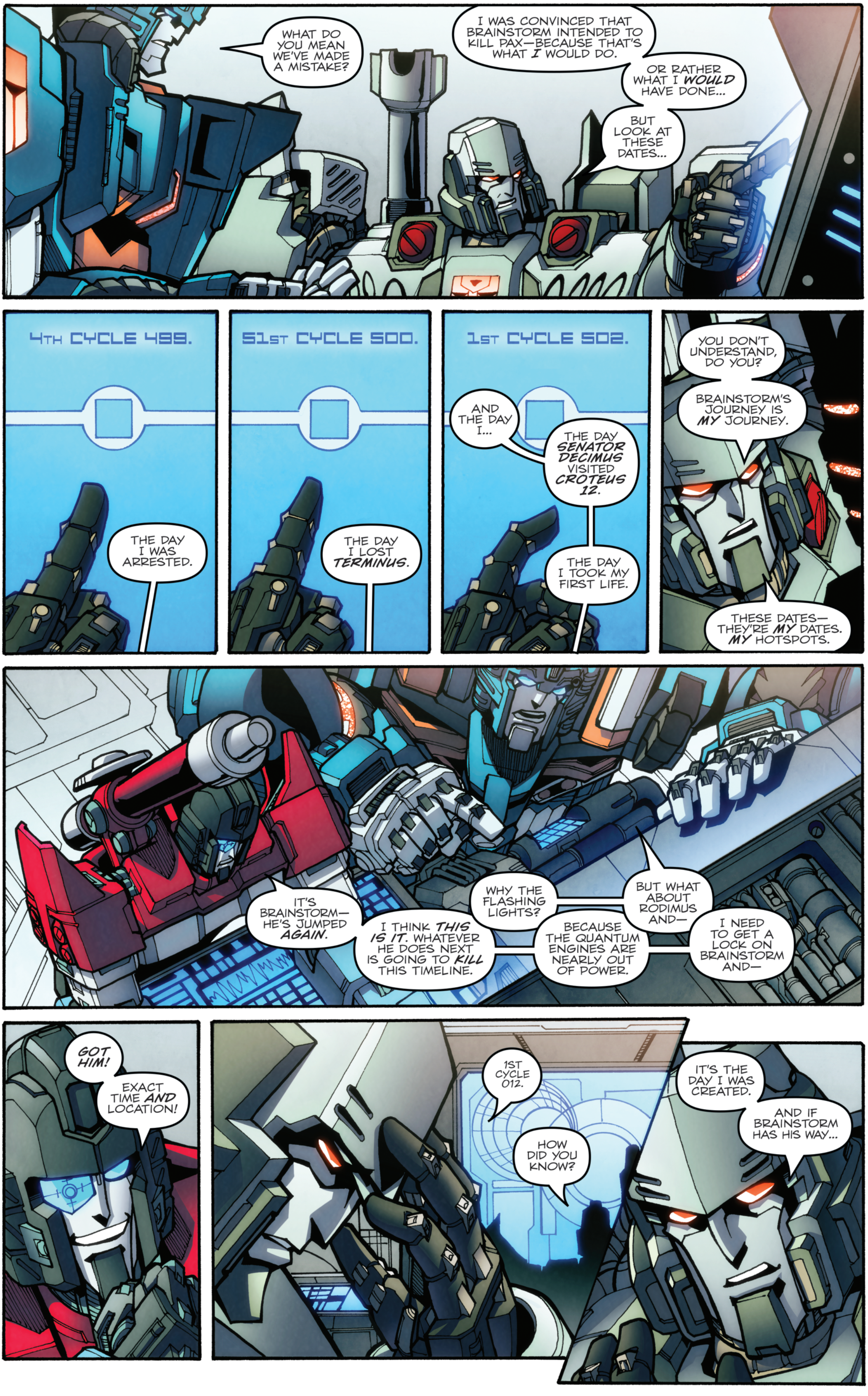

RODION POLICE HQ.
"WE *CAN'T* INTERVENE."
"CAN'T," CHROMEDOME? WHAT D'YOU MEAN "CAN'T"?
OF *COURSE* WE CAN—YOU'VE JUST *DECIDED* WE CAN'T!
YOU'VE DECIDED WE SHOULD *STAND* HERE AND DO *NOTHING* WHILE HALF A MILE AWAY TWO INNOCENT 'BOTS GET *MURDERED!*
WE'RE NOT ALLOWED TO CHANGE HISTORY!
YES—BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT'S *SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN!* HOW MANY TIMES, REWIND?
WE KNOW HOW THIS PLAYS OUT: ANY MOMENT NOW, PAX IS GOING TO RETURN FROM PATROL TO FIND *SPRINGARM* AND *WHEELARCH* DEAD—RIGHT BEFORE HE'S AMBUSHED BY THE SENATE'S THUGS.
IF IN THE NEXT FEW MINUTES BRAINSTORM TURNS UP TO LEND A HAND—TO HELP PAX GET KILLED—THEN *YES*, IN *THAT* SCENARIO WE *COULD* STEP IN.
OTHERWISE, WE'RE *BYSTANDERS.*
DOWN THERE. SOME *NEW ARRIVALS*—
"—AND NONE OF THEM ARE PAX."

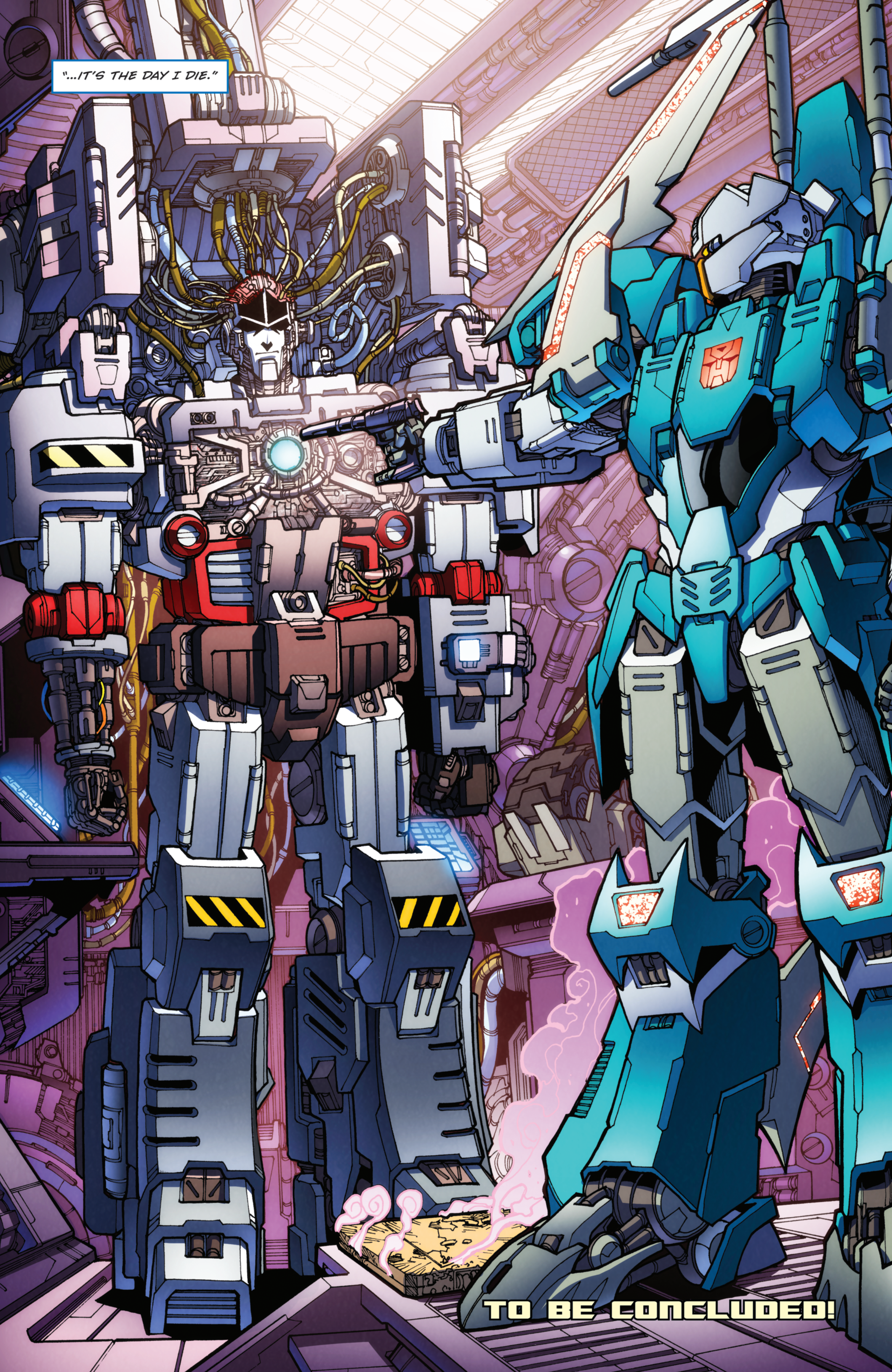

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THIS, BUT I *KNOW* THOSE GUYS. WELL, THE TWO HEAVIES: *HAMMER* AND *ANVIL.*
THEY'RE THE ONES WHO ATTACKED ME—RIGHT HERE, IN FACT—ABOUT A YEAR FROM NOW. ME AND ROLLER. THEY WERE AFTER SHOCKWAVE.
WHY ARE THEY HERE NOW?
LATE FOR THE JAILBREAK, I GUESS.
DO YOU REMEMBER THESE THREE TURNING UP FIRST TIME ROUND, WHIRL?
WHIRL...?
AAAARRRRGGGH
STOP!
WHAT WAS I JUST SAYING ABOUT *NOT INTERVENING!* ABOUT NOT *CHANGING HISTORY!*
WHIRL—
YEAH, WELL MAYBE HISTORY *DESERVES* TO BE CHANGED. MAYBE HISTORY HAD IT COMING.
SERIOUSLY, WHAT DID HISTORY *EVER* DO FOR ME?
YES—AND CAN WE *NOT* HAVE THIS CONVERSATION IN FRONT OF THEM?
I DON'T WANT THEM BEING *TIPPED OFF* ABOUT FUTURE EVENTS—
—AND SEEING AS YOU'VE JUST *RIPPED THEIR HANDS OFF,* I CAN'T MAKE THEM *FORGET* WHAT THEY'RE HEARING.
I REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU, WHIRL. YOU'RE PREPARED TO LET WHEELARCH AND SPRINGARM DIE, BUT THESE THREE SHOW UP AND YOU NEARLY RIP 'EM TO SHREDS...!
YOUR LITTLE *JUNXY* SAYS HE MIGHT GET KILLED IF I GET TOO ROUGH WITH THESE PINHEADS. BUT THEY KILLED ME *FIRST*. THEY STOPPED ME *WORKING*.
STOPPED YOU WORKING? HOW? YOU WERE IN THE *AERIAL CORPS...*



AAARRGH!
AAARRGH!
IF YOU KILL THEM, THEY CAN'T COME BACK HERE IN A YEAR'S TIME TO GET SHOCKWAVE!
AND IF *THEY'RE* NOT AROUND, WHO KNOWS HOW MANY PSYCHOS THE SENATE WILL SEND IN THEIR PLACE? TEN? TWENTY?
AND WHO KNOWS HOW ROLLER AND I WILL FARE AGAINST THEIR REPLACEMENTS?
KILL THEM AND YOU COULD END UP KILLING *ME!*
HM.
AND THAT'S YOUR MOST PERSUASIVE ARGUMENT...?
"I WAS *BORN* INTO THE AERIAL CORPS— BUT I *CHOSE* TO BE A WATCHMAKER. AND THEN THOSE TWO WRECKED MY TOOLS, MY STUDIO...*
*AS SEEN IN ISSUE #6.

"ALL BECAUSE I WOULDN'T PAY FOR THEIR 'PROTECTION'."
IT WAS NEVER ABOUT PROTECTION MONEY... THE *FUNCTIONIST COUNCIL* WANTED US TO PUT YOU IN YOUR PLACE...
THEY FOUND OUT THAT ONE OF THEIR FUNCTIONARIES—A *MODERATE*—HAD GIVEN YOU PERMISSION TO CHANGE JOBS.
WE WERE TOLD TO *KILL YOUR CAREER:* FIRST YOUR TOOLS, THEN YOUR HANDS...
MY *HANDS?* BUT—BUT THAT WAS *LATER*. THE *SENATE* DID THAT TO GET ME ON SIDE...
BACK THEN THE FUNCTIONISTS *CONTROLLED* THE SENATE. AND WHO D'YOU THINK *INVENTED* EMPURATA?
THE *FUNCTIONISTS* DID THIS TO ME?
DID ALL THREE OF THESE GUYS ATTACK YOU?
ER—JUST THE TWO BIG GUYS. WHY?
BECAUSE I'M *AGITATED* AND I NEED TO HURT SOMEONE.
COURSE IT *WOULD* BE THE ONE GUY WHO *DIDN'T* TRASH MY PLACE...
PLEASE—I DIDN'T *DO* ANYTHING! I—
SORRY, BUDDY. GUILTY BY ASSOCIATION.
CHOOM


WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE'VE MADE A MISTAKE?
I WAS CONVINCED THAT BRAINSTORM INTENDED TO KILL PAX—BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT *I* WOULD DO.
OR RATHER WHAT I ***WOULD*** HAVE DONE...
BUT LOOK AT THESE DATES...
4TH CYCLE 499.
THE DAY I WAS ARRESTED.
51ST CYCLE 500.
THE DAY I LOST ***TERMINUS***.
1ST CYCLE 502.
AND THE DAY I...
THE DAY ***SENATOR DECIMUS*** VISITED ***CROTEUS 12***.
THE DAY I TOOK MY FIRST LIFE.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, DO YOU?
BRAINSTORM'S JOURNEY IS ***MY*** JOURNEY.
THESE DATES—THEY'RE ***MY*** DATES. ***MY*** HOTSPOTS.
IT'S BRAINSTORM—HE'S JUMPED ***AGAIN***.
I THINK ***THIS IS IT***. WHATEVER HE DOES NEXT IS GOING TO ***KILL*** THIS TIMELINE.
WHY THE FLASHING LIGHTS?
BUT WHAT ABOUT RODIMUS AND—
BECAUSE THE QUANTUM ENGINES ARE NEARLY OUT OF POWER.
I NEED TO GET A LOCK ON BRAINSTORM AND—
GOT HIM!
EXACT TIME ***AND*** LOCATION!
1ST CYCLE 012.
HOW DID YOU KNOW?
IT'S THE DAY I WAS CREATED.
AND IF BRAINSTORM HAS HIS WAY...


"...IT'S THE DAY I DIE."
TO BE CONCLUDED!